
NEWS RELEASE

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Ministry of Education

B.C. HOSTS LEADING-EDGE EDUCATION CONFERENCE

VICTORIA – The second annual Interactive Innovations conference featuring international education experts using webcasting technology to broadcast to multiple locations opens today in five B.C. communities, three Alberta communities and one conference site in Whitehorse.

“This is an unprecedented opportunity for education partners from around British Columbia to join with colleagues in Alberta and Whitehorse and top education experts to discuss how to improve student achievement,” said Education Minister Shirley Bond. “By coming together in this way, we can harness a wealth of experience and expertise for the benefit of every student in B.C.”

Each of the five B.C. locations will focus on a different educational theme and will webcast a keynote speaker to the other sites. The sites and themes are:

- Vancouver - Leadership, building capacity;
- Kelowna - Literacy, reading across the curriculum;
- Victoria - The first 10 years, windows of opportunity;
- Nelson - Middle years to secondary, what is really important; and
- Prince George - Equitable futures, engaging all learners.

Participating keynote speakers are from Canada and the United States, including renowned educator and author Dr. Michael Fullan of Ontario. Fullan is a leader in educational reform and special adviser to Ontario's Premier and Minister of Education.

“We now have enough change knowledge to improve student learning and achievement on a large scale. It involves focusing on capacity building linked to results,” said Fullan. “Capacity building means developing collaborative teams at the school level, helping schools learn from each other in strong school-district relationships – all of this in the context of government policies at all three levels that provide focus and balance direction and flexibility.”

The Province has provided the British Columbia Confederation of Parent Advisory Councils with a \$36,000 grant to help send a parent representative from each district to this conference. Those parents will return home and share what they learned back in their communities. As well, members of BCCPAC will be presenting a concurrent session at the Vancouver site.

“Whenever parents can join the other education partners learning the same tools, there is a great opportunity to work together to enhance education for our children and strengthen relationships with those partners,” said Lori Tedrick, second vice-president of BCCPAC. “Whenever parents have the opportunity to be involved with educators, it can only bring about positive things for our children.”

- 2 -

This year's conference will also welcome student participants in each of the five B.C. sites. The students will participate in a student leadership forum, the keynote address by Los Angeles high school teacher Marco Torres and will share their experiences via webcast to the other sites.

Interactive Innovations is another way the Province is using technology to transform B.C.'s education system to improve student achievement. By making education experts available all around British Columbia through webcasting, government is making the conference easily accessible for participants who can then take the knowledge back to their districts to put into practice.

In addition to the keynote speakers, participants will have the opportunity to interact with representatives from the Learning in Action Showcase held in December. The showcase highlighted state-of-the-art teaching practices in British Columbia and displayed school districts' best ideas for improving student achievement

The first Innovations conference took place in Victoria in 2004 and was known as the "Innovations and Improvements conference." In 2006, the conference became leading edge when it linked five sites in B.C. to participate in the conference in real time. This year's conference will reach participants in two provinces and one territory, and plans are underway to expand next year's conference to other provinces and U.S. states.

More information on the Interactive Innovations conference can be found at www.interactiveinnovations.ca. An archive of the conference will be made available on the Ministry of Education website after the conclusion of the conference.

Since 2000-01, the Province has increased funding to B.C. public schools by nearly \$958 million: \$551 million in operating grants and \$407 million in one-time grants. During the same period, enrolment has declined by about 42,500 students and is projected to decline by another 30,000 students over the next five years.

-30-

1 backgrounder(s) attached.

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BACKGROUND

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WORLD-CLASS EDUCATORS PRESENT AT B.C. CONFERENCE

The Feb. 28-March 2 Interactive Innovations conference will be held at five connected sites around B.C., three in Alberta and one in Whitehorse. It features keynote speakers from Canada and the United States.

Dr. Michael Fullan (Vancouver) – Fullan is the former Dean of the Ontario Institute for Studies in Education at the University of Toronto. In 2004, Fullan was appointed special adviser to the Premier and Minister of Education in Ontario. He participates as a researcher, consultant, trainer and policy adviser on a wide range of educational change projects with school systems, teachers' federations, research and development institutes and government agencies in Canada and internationally. Fullan has been published widely on the topic of educational change. His most recent books include *Turnaround Leadership: the New Meaning of Educational Change* and *Leading in a Culture of Change*.

Dr. Richard Allington (Kelowna) – Allington is a professor of education at the University of Tennessee. He has served as the president of the International Reading Association and president of the National Reading Conference. Allington received the Outstanding Dissertation Award from the International Reading Association for his study of perceptual processing in young children. His newest book, *Big Brother and the National Reading Curriculum: How Ideology Trumped Evidence*, examines the influence of failed U.S. federal educational policy on reading instruction and the teachers who provide it.

Dr. Fred Renihan (Prince George) – Renihan currently provides leadership in educational-based doctoral programs at Simon Fraser University. He is a former superintendent of schools in Surrey and has been a dean of education, teacher, principal, director of education and the deputy minister of education in Saskatchewan. Renihan's current professional focus is on leadership issues and learning communities/learning organizations.

Dr. Patrick Renihan (Prince George) – Renihan is a professor in the Department of Educational Administration at the University of Saskatchewan. He has been awarded the Saskatchewan Council on Educational Administrative Leadership Award for his contributions to education in the province. Renihan's PhD was on organizational paradigms and analysis, and his current professional focus is on organizational behaviour; instructional supervision and staff development; and administrative roles.

Marco Torres (Nelson) – Torres is a social studies teacher at San Fernando High school in Los Angeles. His method is simple: reach students through the media most familiar to them: video, music and movies. He introduces students to the techniques of media creation and then turns them loose on projects that are actually relevant to their lives. At the end of the semester, Torres showcases the projects in what he calls the iCan Film Festival, which attracts more than 1,000 people. By reaching his students with lessons that are meaningful and relevant, by providing tools they can use to communicate, he inspires his students to achieve.

Rosa and Elizabeth Ruvalcaba (Nelson) – Rosa and Elizabeth Ruvalcaba are former students of Marco Torres, who, as young students, were recognized locally, nationally and internationally for their moviemaking and digital storytelling skills. Rosa is a media studies graduate from the University of San Francisco and is now in a Masters/Credential program and has begun student teaching. Elizabeth is a third-year student at the University of California, Berkeley.

Dr. Andy Hargreaves (Via Webcast from Boston) – Hargreaves is the Thomas More Brennan Chair in Education in the Lynch School of Education at Boston College. Its mission is to promote social justice and connect theory and practice in education. Hargreaves has written or edited more than 25 books on culture, change and leadership in education. His most recent book is Sustainable Leadership with Dr. Dean Fink.

Stephanie Hirsh (Vancouver) – Stephanie Hirsh is executive director of the National Staff Development Council (NSDC) in Texas. In her position, Hirsh helps states, national and state organizations, and selected school systems develop policies and programs focused on quality professional learning. She facilitated the process that led to the national dissemination of NSDC's Standards for Staff Development and Moving Standards into Practice: Innovation and Configurations. Hirsh has received a Lifetime Achievement Award from the Texas Staff Development Council and a Master Trustee Award from the Texas Association of School Boards.

Dr. David Sousa (Victoria) – Sousa is an international educational consultant located in South Florida, who has taught high school science, served in high-level supervisory positions and has conducted hundreds of workshops across North America and in Europe. He has edited science books and published numerous books and articles in leading educational journals on staff development, science education and brain research. In the 1990s, Sousa turned a passing interest in brain research into a full time job by learning more about the learning process and providing educators with practical advice, exercises and ideas about how to put information about the brain into practice.

Shari Ulrich, with Julia Graff and Bill Runge (Vancouver benefit concert) – Shari Ulrich is a B.C. Entertainment Hall of Famer, singer-songwriter, composer, arranger, producer and multi-instrumentalist, who continues to write and perform across North America, often joined on stage by her daughter Julia Graf. Julia is a student at West Vancouver secondary school, who is a talented pianist, violin and guitar player and singer. Bill Runge is a successful performer, composer, arranger and orchestrator who also plays saxophone, flute, clarinet, electric and string bass, piano, guitar, pennywhistle and accordion.

The money raised through the benefit concert will be distributed equally to each of the five host locations to continue their work in improving student learning.

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